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NEMO'S ALMANAC 2016

a literary competition in its 125th year

'can you imagine what that must be like to Little Nemo, lurching and heaving in his watery bottle while the diaphragm hops up and down?'

Edited by Nigel Forde
Price: £3.00

NEMO'S ALMANAC 2016

send to:
Ian Patterson
Queens' College
Cambridge
CB3 9ET

RULES

The quotations are to be identified by reference to author, work and, where appropriate, line number or number of chapter, act or scene. Ten marks are given for each answer with full references **including source**. Incomplete answers and guesses will receive marks on their merits. Extra marks will be given for answers found only by one or two competitors, also for exceptionally good answers, at the Editor's discretion.

2. The Prizes are book tokens of amounts dictated by the modest budget of the Almanac (this year these are £50, £40 and £30). No competitor may can take a first prize two years running, or any prize at all in the fourth year, after three years running.

3. Answers are to be typed or legibly written on one side of the paper only, leaving a margin for marks on the right hand side. Full name and address are to be written on the first page. The entry, should reach the editor not later than September 1st of the year on the cover.
Please mark your envelope "Nemo".

4. If a reasonably sized stamped addressed envelope is enclosed, entries will be returned with an answer sheet.

5. A pseudonym may be used, but prizewinners' names will be published.

6. No author is quoted more than once. No extract is in translation.

7. The editor's decision is final in every case.

January

1
Edinburgh has but partly abdicated, and still wears, in parody, her metropolitan trappings. Half a Capital and half a country town, the whole city leads a double existence

2
And then Belfast below, a radio

with its back ripped off,
among the agricultural abstract

of the fields.

3
What made so many thousand Christians travel from France, Britain, etc., into the Holy Land, spend such huge sums of money, go a pilgrimage so familiarly to Jerusalem, to creep and crouch, but slavish superstition?

4
In Prague and Budapest they wear
rosettes, wave flags. A furious year
gathers to a close. The wind disorders
ships of state and fleets of boarders

5
Now flying to Washington Moscow Saigon
Cairo Jerusalem Brussels,
In power above the cloudbank in the light of
The sun, hands shaking with heads-of-state,
Or talking to them on the telephone
In his black office, in an ordinary morning.

6
Shall it be Troy or Rome
I fence against the foam,
Or my own name, to stay
When I depart for aye?

February

1
Moreover, Polly had been today to the dentist. That also seemed always to happen whenever she came to London. He seldom hurt her, but he did indignities to the secret places of her mouth — shrivelling its sensitive wet membranes with a squirt of hot wind, plastering a dry cloth on to her wet tongue, poking wads of dry cotton wool into her cheek

2
One's a crown, two's a crown
three, four, five distal occlusal,
six distal occlusal, seven occlusal.
Upper left: one mesial incisal,
Two mesial incisal, three's a crown,
Four, five is absent, space closed.

3
'I left my teeth on the mantelpiece.'
'Never you mind,' they said, 'you're not going to bite nobody,' and they gave him a bottle with a straw.
'I might want to smile,' he said.
'Not you,' they said.

4
It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression.

5
The dentist bent over her, thrusting a mirror into her mouth, polishing it and looking again. Then he swung a little circular tray nearer his reach: on it, long, pointed instruments were laid out on a rack. Taking one, he bent over her, his own mouth slightly open. The elbows of his white coat were dirty.

6
Whene'er along the ivory disks, are seen,
The filthy footsteps of the dark gangrene;
When caries come, with stealthy pace to throw
Corrosive ink spots on those banks of snow —
Brook no delay, ye trembling, suffering fair,
But fly for refuge to the dentist's care

March

1
When the old servant reveals she is the mother
  Of the young count whose elder brother
Has betrayed him, the heroine, disguised
  As the Duke's own equerry, sings Or'
Che sono, pale from the wound she has received
  In the first act.

2
God is not here nor there, though there
  The new soprano sings
Betrayed Elvira's wild despair,
  Plucking his nerves like strings.

3
I have sat through an Italian Opera, till, for sheer pain, and inexplicable anguish, I have rushed out into the noisiest places of the crowded streets, to solace myself with sounds, which I was not obliged to follow, and get rid of the distracting torment of endless, fruitless, barren attention!

4
The climax was reached in the mad scene. Lucia, clad in white, as befitted her malady, suddenly gathered up her streaming hair and bowed her acknowledgements to the audience. Then from the back of the stage—she feigned not to see it—there advanced a kind of bamboo clothes-horse, stuck all over with bouquets.

5
My brides are ravished away, are ravished away,
Two Leonoras, Gilda, Violetta,
One swaggering tenor has taken them,
One death seduced them to fever.

6
At night I went to Covent Garden and saw Love in a Village, a new comic opera, for the first night. I liked it much. I saw it from the gallery, but I was first in the pit. Just before the overture began to be played, two Highland officers came in. The mob in the upper gallery roared out, 'No Scots! No Scots! Out with them!' hissed and peltedt them with apples. My heart warmed to my countrymen, my Scotch blood boiled with indignation.

April

1
When did I say my prayers? In anno '88, when the great armada was
coming; and in anno '99 when the great thund'ring and lightning was.
I prayed heartily then, I'faith, to overthrow Poovies' new buildings; I
kneel'd by my great iron chest, I remember.

2
And when, for that, I was sent upstairs
I *did* kneel down and say my prayers;
But the King who sits in your high church steeple
Has nothing to do with us fairy-people!

3
Pour out your praise or plaint
Meekly and duly;
I will not enter there,
To sully your pure prayer
With thoughts unruly.

4
But when thy flesh, hither, to sleep repairs,
Say, as when to thy bed thou go'st, thy prayers.
Since he most oft forgets himself in death
That thinks not of his God that gives him breath,
Invoke his mercy ere thy rest thou take;
For as thou fallst asleep, so thou shalt wake.

5
I like speed, summer, the country roads,
but never could master a bike
Believing in God because of the need to praise —
though fear alone, so far, makes me long to pray —
if granted another hundred years
I might learn
How to say prayers.

6

I am a simple man come up
from the long stoop of the sea.
I have come a long way up the valley
To ask your prayers for me.

May

1
Low in pocket, cowed in courage,
Safely glad to sup their porridge,
And vacation's over — then
Hey for Dublin town again!

2
I cannot away with him: he will eat a leg of mutton while I
am in my porridge, the lean Poluphagus, his belly is like
Barathrum

3
Not a plate but scoff'd at porridge,
Not a cup but floated borage.

4
Nevertheless, yesterday morning, I ate my oatmeal —
porridge, as
he called it — with John Keats,
Keats said I was absolutely right to invite him: due to its
glutinous texture, gluey lumpishness, hint of slime,
and unusual willingness to disintegrate, oatmeal
must never be eaten alone.

5
Scouring out the porridge pot,
Round and round and round!

Out with all the scraith and scoopery,
Lift the eely ooly droopery,
Chase the glubbery slobbery gloopery
Round and round and round!

6
Engelmann climbing up the stairs
slipped with saucepan full,
and steaming oatmeal porridge splashed
his coat of threadbare wool.

June

1
They are cozening mad, they are brawling mad, they are proud mad;
They are all, all mad. I came from a world of mad women,
Mad as March hares

2
'Give me a violin—, I'll play to him and sooth him in his melancholy Hours—Beware ye gentle Nymphs of Cupid's Thunderbolts, avoid the piercing Shafts of Jupiter—Look at that Grove of Firs—I see a Leg of Mutton—They told me Edward was not Dead; but they deceived me—they took him for a Cucumber—'

3
They have kill'd my squirrel in his cage:
Is this a grasshopper?—Ha! no; it is my
Whiskerandos—you shall not keep him—
I know you have him in your pocket—
An oyster may be cross'd in love! —who says
A whale's a bird?

4
How now, saucy Jack,
Why appear'st thou in black?—
A packet to me, say'st, directed;
Ha! ha! ha! ha!
Bow enemies, bow!
Or I'll harass you now:
'Tis the comet so long we've expected. —

5
You pity me? Then be my mother! The squirrel had a mother, but she drank and the squirrel fled! Hush! The sing a brave song in our parts—it runs somewhat thus:
"The cat and the dog and the little puppee
Sat down in a—down in a— in a—"
I forget what they sat down in, but so the song goes!
Listen—I've come to pinch her!

6
...the old gentleman, after a short pause, raised his voice again and demanded a thunder sandwich. This article not being forthcoming either, he requested to be served with a fricassee of boot-tops and goldfish sauce, and then laughing heartily, gratified his hearers with a very long, very loud, and most melodious bellow.

July

1
When sleepy louts lose many a crook,
And codlings drop when trees are shook;
When salt mushrooms nightly spring,
And martins dip the dappled wing

2
Deep in the grounds of a burnt-out hotel,
Among the bathtubs and the washbasins
A thousand mushrooms crowd to a keyhole.

3
I pulled a mushroom, tall and bullet-like
with a gunmetal glint, and turned it over.
The gills looked inky, sooty, dangerous.

4
He turn'd as to an equal, not too low,
But kindly; Satan met his ancient friend
With more hauteur, as might an old Castilian
Poor noble meet a mushroom rich civilian.

5
(Memory loads
My plate with mushrooms.) But I woke at length
And left you, travelling light by mountain roads
To Elsewhere; drank at desert wells; gained strength.

6
Grey shabby Mushrooms squeal
as they are hacked to death
slithering in their own sweat.
Like policemen to a motorway accident,
Toast arrives.

August

1
The spicy heap fir'd with celestial rays
Doth burn the aged Phoenix, when straight stays
The chariot of th' amazed moon

2
Half-buried to her flaming breast
In this bright tree, she makes her nest,
Hundred-sunned Phoenix! when she must
Crumble at length to hoary dust!

3
Ask me no more if east or west
The phoenix builds her spicy nest;
For unto you at last she flies,
And in your fragrant bosom dies.

4
By feathers green, across Casbeen,
The pilgrims track the Phoenix flown,
By gems he strewed in waste and wood,
And jeweled plumes at random thrown.

5
Will a phoenix arise
from a womb evolv'd
among the curved crests of foam?
At Aphrodite's birth
were the waters in white flame?

6
This hedge is a cool perch for the brown turtle-dove,
His phoenix unseen:
Such was their love that perhaps they grew to be one

September

1
Shaving was not an easy task, for his hand continued to shake very much; and shaving requires attention, even when you don't dance while you are at it. But if he had cut the end of his nose off, he would have put a piece of sticking-plaster over it, and been quite satisfied.

2
Under the fading lamp, half-dressed — my brain
Idling on some compulsive fantasy —
I towel my shaven jaw and stop, and stare,
Riveted by a dark exhausted eye,
A dry downturning mouth.

3
'Sir,' said he, 'since I have dealt in suds, I could never discover more than two reasons for shaving, the one is to get a beard, and the other is to get rid of one. I conjecture, sir, it may not be long since you shaved, from the former of these motives. Upon my word you have had good success, for one may say of your beard, that it is *tondenti gravior.*'

4
Shaving this morning, I look out of the window
In expectation: will another small
Tendril of ivy, dry and straw-yellow,
Have put its thin clasp on the garden wall?

5
I pause with razor poised, scowling derision
At the mirrored man whose beard needs my attention

6
The customers, waiting their turns, were all reading
The 'Daily,' the 'Herald,' the 'Post', little heeding
The young man who blurted out such a blunt question;
No one raised a head, or even made a suggestion;
And the barber kept on shaving.

October

1
this morning I was visited by a Mr. Lewis, a smart cockney, whose object is to amend the handwriting. He uses as a mechanical aid a sort of puzzle of wire and ivory which is put upon the fingers to keep them in the desired position like the puzzle on a dog's nose to make him bear himself right in the field.

2
I have to get a few lines off every day
To my father, eighty-seven. He can't read a word
Of my handwriting, and doesn't try, but he likes
The postman.

3
An old lady writes me in a spidery style,
Each character trembling, and I see a veined hand
Pellucid as paper, traveling on a skein
Of such frail thoughts its thread is often broken

4
He looked again at the direction. The mysterious influences of night invested the writing with the presence of the unknown writer. Somebody's — some woman's — hand had travelled softly over the paper bearing his name; her unrevealed eyes had watched every curve as she formed it

5
Certain handwriting can turn the stomach, after one, after five, after twenty-five years. Fergus's was, like much male writing, cramped, but with characteristic little flourishes. Maud's stomach turned

6
(Text completely illegible from this point
because of lake-water damage and otter dung.)

November

1
over us, Apocryphal fire,
under us, the earth sway, dip of a floor,
slope of a pavement

2
the street lamps hold
Fixed globes of sparkled haze high in the air
And the black pavement runs with wrinkled gold
In pools and wet dispersions, fiery spills
Of liquid copper, of squirming, molten brass.

3
Why, while I feel my ears catching through slumber the run
of the streamlet,
Still am I pacing the pavement, and seeing the sign for accosting,
Still am I passing those figures, nor daring to look in their faces?

4
At pavement's end and in the slaty weather
I stare with glazing eyes at meagre stone,
Rain and the gas are sputtering together
A dreary tune! O leave my heart alone

5
The old feet will never find pavements in the sky.
The new-found wings cannot etherealize earth's solid dust.

6
Harlequin in lozenges
Of love and hate, I walked in these
Striped and ragged rigmaroles;
Along the pavement my footsoles
Trod warily on living coals.

December

1
For Justice, though she's painted blind,
Is to the weaker side inclin'd

2
In the library of the Liverpool Athenæum is a book in French,
printed for the use
Of the blind: the letters, which are very large, are raised cameo-like,
so as to be
Distinguished, it is supposed, by a practiced touch. This is a very useless
invention;
Whatever blind man could afford to purchase books printed in this
manner, could afford
to keep a person to read to him.

3
nor sometimes forget
Those other two equaled with me in fate,
So were I equaled with them in renown,
Blind Thamyris and blind Maeonides

4
Then God defend us from the Arts I say!
Send battle, murder, sudden death, O pray!
Rather than be such a blind human fool
I'd be an ass, a hog, a worm, a chair, a stool!

5
And are not Men than they more blind,
Who having Eys yet never find
The Bliss in which they mov:
Like Statues dead
They up and down are carried,
Yet neither see nor lov.

6
Pity the blind with bright and perfect sight
Who stares upon the empty earth and skies,
Believing in the evidence of eyes,
And has not seen that treachery and flight.

Answers

COVER: Coleridge, Julia

JANUARY
1 Hecht: The Short End III
2 Belloc: The Frog
3 Shaw: Back to Methuselah Part IV, Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman
4 Abse: The French Master
5 Swift: The Description of a Salamander
5 Adam Thorpe: The Common Room, Chemistry.

FEBRUARY
1 Reading: Ballad, stanza 3
2 Thomas Lisle: On Orpheus Going to Hell for a Wife
3 John Ashbery: Syringa
4 Pope: On Mrs. Tofts, a Celebrated Opera Singer
5 Maurice Lindsay: A Ballad of Orpheus
6 J. B. Morton: On a Lady Singing

MARCH
1 Gifford: Song
2 Wordsworth: To the Spade of a Friend
3 G. Wither: A Collection of Emblems II xxx
4 Frank Kendon: The Looker-On
5 Evan Lloyd: The Methodist; The Enthusiasts.
6 Herbert: Providence

APRIL
1 W. B. Yeats: The Poet Pleads with the Elemental Powers
2 Kenneth Grahame: The Reluctant Dragon
3 Causley: St. Martha and the Dragon stanza 3
4 Stevie Smith: Fafnir and the Knights
5 W. S. Graham: Dear Who I Mean
6 Matthew Francis: Dragons

MAY
1 U. A. Fanthorpe: Weather Map
2 Gillian Clarke: Fulmarus Glacialis
3 Kit Wright: Correspondence 3. Sea Missive
4 Carol Ann Duffy: Prayer
5 Heaney: Glanmore Sonnets VII
6 Duncan Forbes: Forecast

JUNE
1 Geoffrey Lehmann: The Golden Wall
2 Patric Dickinson: This Cold Universe
3 Louis Simpson: Physical Universe
4 Frost: Sceptic
5 Anna Laetitia Barbauld: A Summer Evening's Meditation
6 R. S. Thomas: Night Sky

JULY
1 Cambridge: On Seeing a Tapestry Chair-Bottom
2 Orwell: The Italian Soldier Shook my Hand.
3 Gunn: Claus von Stauffenberg
4 Sean Jennet: Cycle VI
5: H. Dunmore: Christmas Roses
6 J. Bronowski: Take your Gun

AUGUST
1 A. Bennett: These Twain Chap. 6. I
2 Guy Boas: Chocolates
3 Carol Rumens: A Poor Man
4 W. Stevens: Sea Surface Full of Clouds III
5 Ogden Nash: Assorted Chocolates
6 Jackie Kay: Mummy and Donor and Deirdre

SEPTEMBER
1 E. B. Browning: A Year's Spinning
2 Michael Donaghy: Touch
3 Shakespeare: All's Well that Ends Well I iii
4 Morris Bishop: There's Money in Mother and Father
5 Augusta Webster: A Castaway 314-319
6 Michael Longley: Ghetto III

OCTOBER
1 Bloomfield: The Farmer's Boy, Autumn 140+
2 Gerald Bullett: Logos
3 Hugo Williams: Broken Dreams
4 V. Sackville-West: Reddín, penultimate section
5 P. Bourke Marston: A Dream
6 Graves: The Shout

NOVEMBER
1 Beckett: Molloy
2 P. Kavanagh: Bank Holiday
3 Robert Wells: Middle Age
4 Maurice Riordan: Time Out
5 Forrest Reid: Young Tom, opening
6 Chesterton: What I found in my Pocket

DECEMBER
1 Masefield: Reynard the Fox Part 1
2 Marvell: Clorinda and Damon, chorus
3 E. K. Brathwaite: Cherries
4 James Simmons: Written, Directed By and Starring...
5 Dryden: A Song for St Cecilia's Day 1687
6 Dickens: Edwin Drood Chap 1

Marks and Prizes

1st 2nd and 3rd Prize (shared)	
700	Sue Bird
700	S, Woodman and P. Hearsum
700	Pamela Thompson
700	Caroline Heal
695	Eric Love
690	Elspeth Christie
685	Ian Patterson
660	Alison Sheehan-Hunt
640	Jenny Naish
630	Gli Amici
580	Michael and Carolyn Greet
470	S.A. Osborn
470	Mrs. Pearce
420	Mary Milne-Day, Sara Price and Anne Willitts
410	Kenneth Thornton
397	Bill Kyle
315	Rosemary Johnson
280	R. Scott and A. Walker
250	Davie Dolan Jr.
220	Alan Langley
205	The Mossfield Gang
200	Tom Durham
195	Mrs. G. Rigby
150	M. Webb-Ingall
130	Mr. R. Bolton

REMARKS

I have neither the wit nor the learning of Alan Hollinghurst who constructed a delightful farewell page when he passed on the editorship to Gerard Benson, so I will content myself with telling you that I have, with this edition, surrendered the reins, the orb, the sceptre, the conch shell – choose your own image – to Dr. Ian Patterson, and I shall once again have the joy of following the chase rather than dropping the torn newspaper and then having to do the clearing up. This sounds grudging: I didn't mean it to. I have enjoyed the editorship immensely and thoroughly enjoyed the privilege of puzzling you and delighting you and annoying you in (roughly) equal measure but I'd rather stop before I run out of ideas and start treading water or repeating myself. I did toy with the idea of constructing a final page on death, from authors such as Graves, Churchyard, Coffin, Sexton et. al., but time and inspiration ran out, so you will have to make do with a slightly tearful goodbye in these remarks. This year, to mark the occasion, we again have a 'Nemo' in the cover quotation rather than the usual 'Almanac'; I should perhaps tell you that it is prose, so don't go searching through your poetry shelves until you get further in.

I know I seldom reply to them, but I shall miss all your letters, cards, arguments, recriminations (well-deserved) news and increasing anger at the lack of libraries. Not, perhaps, that it will be for ever: you all have my email address as well as my street address and I should be sorry to lose touch with all of you who have become more like a family than merely friends (i.e. feuds, arguments, insults and heart warming loyalty.) If I may be allowed an advert, you can still find my poems in whatever bookshops still exist: so far 'A Map of the Territory' and 'The Choir Outing' published by Carcanet/OxfordPoets, and you will now find no fewer than four novels on Amazon Kindle: two literary and two detective stories. More when they get written. And before you wail, you can download a free app which will allow you to read Kindle on your computer, so there!

I am sure you will welcome Ian Patterson and enjoy his pages: he has been a quite formidable contestant, always well up in the marks list, and that, I think, bodes well. Or ill, depending on how you look at it. A new editor always means a change of style and taste and I shall probably limp along in the final few places for a year or two until I get on his wavelength. As you can see from the panel above the Rules, he teaches at Cambridge so he will have access to the best libraries (apart, of course, ahem, from those at the older university...) and I hope that, being in touch with undergraduates, he will find a way of engaging some of the younger generation in our perhaps rather erudite pastime. He is now Cap'n Nemo, his word is law and his word is final, and he will have his own way of doing things. He may make whatever changes he wishes, and perhaps he will include more prose extracts from plays and novels which, I know, many of you will welcome but for the moment all the arrangements stand. May I, though, issue a request on his behalf? When you enclose a self-addressed envelope for the return of your script and the answer sheets, please make sure it is big enough. Most of you do, but quite often comes delicately-coloured stationery which would scarcely contain an A4 sheet. Grouse over. If it was a grouse.

Congratulations I think are owed to Eric Love who, on only his second go, scored pretty magnificently. He also wrote a letter about Nemo and the Internet, identifying the problems but not really able to offer a solution. I'm quite pleased that it is no longer my problem, and your new editor may find a better solution than I have attempted. Entries were, as you will see, well down this year. A bit disappointing, but maybe it doesn't matter: the health of Nemo is reflected rather in the number who order it than in those who submit an entry, and the purchasers seem to be holding up fairly well.

The baffling extracts this year – to most of you, though not to all – were Adam Thorpe and Gerald Bullett. Enough people found them though, so extra marks could not really be awarded. Should I apologise for including Beckett's 'Molloy'? My edition does not mention that it is a translation, but I should have remembered. My defence is that it was translated with the help of Beckett himself. I shall remain unrepentant. Sorry.

There is nothing more really that needs to be said. The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo: you that way, we this.

Notices

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The five sat on springy heather under cotton wool clouds munching tomato sandwiches. Even Timmy was allowed his share which he swallowed in one go! Gulp!

'What's that you've got, Ju?' asked Dick.

'I think it's a code!' said Julian, the eldest of the five adventurers, 'probably dropped by an ill-spoken man with a twisted lip, a greasy scarf, a tendency to be cruel to animals and a quite dreadful accent!'

'Beastly!' said George. 'We'll keep Timmy out of his way!'

'Woof!' said Timmy and thumped his tail on the ground.

'It says Capitals, Blindness, Mushrooms, Madness, Porridge and Prayers!' said Julian.

'Gosh!'

'I say!'

'And Opera, Shaving, Handwriting, Phoenix, Dentists and Pavements. What can it mean? Sorry, I couldn't manage an exclamation mark just then!'

'Look, there's an address!' said Anne.

'So there is!' said Dick. 'Well done, Anne! You have to send off for Nemo's Almanack!'

'To **Nigel Forde, The Gate House, Burnby Lane, Pocklington YO42 1UL!**'

'But it costs £3 or £10 for four!'

'It could be the beginning of a new adventure!' said George. 'And even a farmhouse tea!'

Well done, famous five!

Sorry this is so late, but as I dare say you have realised, it has been a little damp up here in Yorkshire: no access to stationers, post office or even post box. Hence the delay.

I should also add, shamefacedly, that I have managed to include two extracts by the same author. I apologise, but what good does that do?

All good wishes

Nemo